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THE TOURNAMENT, A TRAGEDY.

(*Price Two Shillings.*)

THE

TOURNAMENT,

A

TRAGEDY;

IMITATED FROM

THE CELEBRATED GERMAN DRAMA,

ENTITLED

AGNES BERNAUER,

WHICH WAS WRITTEN

BY A NOBLEMAN OF HIGH RANK,

And founded on a Fact that occurred in Bavaria about the Year

M,CCCC,XXXV.

BY MARIANA STARKE,

Author of the Widow of Malabar, of Letters from Italy, between the years 1792 and 1798.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ERNEST, - -	*Duke of Bavaria-Munick.*
ALBERT, - -	*Son to Ernest.*
THORRING, -	*Kinsman to Ernest.*
The VIDAM, -	*Or Viceroy of Straubing.*
SEYBELSTORF,	*Groom of the Chambers to Ernest.*
EMERSHOF, -	*Ambassador from Wirtemberg.*
ZENGER, - -	*Friend to Albert.*
OSWALD, - -	*Friend and Esquire to the Vidam.*
PRESIDENT, -	*Of the Council of Straubing.*
AGNES, - - -	*Wife to Albert.*

Counsellors of State to Ernest---Burgomasters and Counsellors of Straubing---Princes, Knights, Esquires, and Marshals, attending the Tournament---Officers, Soldiers, and People.

SCENE, BAVARIA.

N. B. The Imitator has ventured to deviate from the truth by preserving the life of Agnes, who was really thrown into the Danube.

Just published by the Author of The Tournament;
In Two Volumes octavo, price 14*s. Boards.*

LETTERS,

From Italy,

Between the Years 1792 *and* 1798,

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And also designed for the Use of

INVALIDS'

and of those

FAMILIES

Who may not choose to incur the Expence attendant upon travelling with a

COURIER.

THE

TOURNAMENT.

ACT I.

A Hall in ALBERT'S *Castle, near Ratisbon.—Folding-doors at the upper end.—Music, and a Nuptial procession, closed by* ALBERT, AGNES, *and Zenger.*

ALBERT.

ONCE more my lovely Agnes looks herself;
The clouds of woe are fled, and radiant joy
Adorns each feature with new tints of beauty.

AGNES.

Yet, happiness like mine, so undeserv'd,
So great, so exquisite, too often proves
The herald of misfortune.—Providence
Deals forth it's gifts with such an equal hand,
That, in the sparkling goblet of delight,
Full oft we find the bitter dregs of woe.

ALBERT.

Banish these gloomy thoughts.—A self-tormentor
Can ne'er be blest.

AGNES.

Forgive me---but, alas!
My heart has known such strange vicissitudes—
Such rapid turns from joy to deepest sorrow,
That while I bend with thankfulness to heaven
For all the smiling prospects which surround me,
I tremble, lest a sudden storm should rise
And cloud the blissful scene.

ALBERT.

Confide in Albert;
He'll strive to shelter thee from ev'ry storm,
And make life's checker'd prospects always pleasing.
Art thou not mine? Has not this very hour
In wedlock's silken bonds for ever joined us?
Who, then, shall dare to blast the hallow'd joys
Of Albert's bride, Bavaria's future queen?

AGNES.

Alas! thy royal father.—

ALBERT.

Dread him not.
That Power who sow'd in ev'ry human heart
The seeds of spotless love—best gift of heaven!—
That Power will guard the precious plant from ill,
And bless the soil in which it vig'rous blooms.

ZENGER.

Let ev'ry menial of my castle
Drink deep of mirth to-day—let ev'ry tongue
Grow vocal in my lovely Agnes' praise;
Till heaven's high vault shall echo with her name,
And zephyrs waft it to my father's palace.

[*Exeunt* ZENGER *and Train.*

Manent ALBERT *and* AGNES.

ALBERT.

Hah!—tears, my Agnes!—say, what cruel cause?

AGNES.

AGNES.

Joy—anxious fearful joy!—Forgive my weakness!—
But is the man, whom more than life I love,
Bavaria's prince, is he indeed my husband?
Has he, whose melting eloquence might lure
Virtue herself to tread the paths of shame,
O! has he deign'd to make the lowly Agnes,
The friendless child of misery his bride?—
Sure 'tis delusion all!—

ALBERT.

No, mine thou art,
By ev'ry sacred tie---for ever mine---
And earth, to me, becomes a second heaven!

AGNES.

I cannot speak my feelings.——Let me weep,
And press a thousand times this gen'rous hand,
Which gives me, what beyond all crowns I value—
A title to thy love. —Yet, should thy father,
The lofty Ernest, who contemptuous looks
On birth like mine; O! should he spurn me from him!—

ALBERT.

Fear not.—Nobility of soul, my Agnes,
Outshines the highest titles kings bestow.

AGNES.

Thou view'st me with a lover's partial eyes—
But, should Elizabeth of Wirtemberg——

ALBERT.

She was my father's choice.—This heart disown'd her.—

AGNES.

Still, if she ever had beheld my Albert,
I wou'd have wept at her unhappy lot.—

ALBERT.

And yet, when first my guardian-genius brought thee
To this enraptur'd view, thy looks, thy words,
Were cold, repelling as drear winter's aspect.

AGNES.

O! cou'd I then indulge the faintest hope
Of what has since occurred?—An orphan girl,
Unconscious even who my father was;—
Defenceless; and, save innocence alone,
Devoid of ev'ry treasure——cou'd I dare
Aspire to Albert's hand?—O! how my heart
Leap'd in this panting bosom when thy glances,
Ardent and fraught with dang'rous love, fell on me!
With what timidity were these fond eyes
Uprear'd to follow Albert!—With what grief
Did I return to my sequestered cottage,
Weeping thy absence!—and when fame rehears'd
Albert's heroic deeds, when all the world
Resounded with his praises, I alone
Silent remain'd—of all the world suspicious!

ALBERT.

Soul of my soul!—Is Albert then to thee,
All his enchanting Agnes is to him?
Intoxicating joy!——Dost thou remember
That hour when first I sought to call thee mine?

AGNES.

Do I remember?—Can I e'er forget
The wild emotion of my woe-worn mother;
Her dire distrust of thee, her fatal fears,
So strong, alas! they dragg'd her to the tomb!—
How solemn and how dreadful was that moment,
When, trembling on the utmost verge of life,
She faintly wrung my hand, look'd mournful on me,

Then

Then, sighing deep, exclaimed: "My child, my Agnes,
Beware the tempter, man!"

ALBERT.

Ill-fated Blanch!
Deserted by the husband of her youth,
His very name, with anxious care, hid from her,
No wonder she should cherish dire distrust,
And think, nor truth nor virtue dwelt in man!

Enter ZENGER.

ZENGER.

Two knights, my prince, (their coarsers white with foam)
Wind loud the horn before the eastern gate.
One comes from royal Ernest; and the other
Bears letters from the Count of Wirtemberg.

AGNES.

The Count of Wirtemberg!—Protect me, heaven!

ZENGER.

They plead extremest haste.

ALBERT.

Accurs'd intrusion!

ZENGER.

One, if I err not, is Count Eberhard,
Straubing's despotic viceroy.

ALBERT.

Eberhard!
The business sure is weighty, since he deigns
To be the messenger.—Admit him straight.

[*Exit* ZENGER.

My drooping love, retire; and arm thy mind
'Gainst each afflictive thought; for Albert's honor
Shall

Shall be like ermine spotless; and his faith
Sacred, immutable, as heaven's decrees.

AGNES.

Think not I doubt thy faith; or, for myself
Admit one gloomy presage.—But, should'st thou
Be doom'd to feel the agonizing wounds
Parental rage inflicts, then wou'd thy Agnes
Be made a wretch indeed!

ALBERT.

Heaven guard thy peace!—
But see, the knights approach.—My love, retire.—
Soon I'll dismiss them, and impatient fly
To happiness and thee. [*Exit* AGNES.] Why comes the viceroy?—
If to upbraid me for my love to Agnes,
He comes too late—and if to force me from her,
He might as well attempt to force this earth
From it's firm basis.——No—our thread of life
Was spun together—Heaven itself has join'd us,
And nought, save death, shall burst the bond in twain.

Enter THE VICEROY *of* STRAUBING, EMERSHOF, *and Attendants.*

ALBERT.

Viceroy, I little thought to see thee here—
Perhaps, I little wish'd it.

VICEROY.

Friendship, Albert,
Impell'd my steps.—

ALBERT.

Forgive me, then.—Kind friendship
Must be at all times welcome.

EMERSHOF.

EMERSHOF.

Royal Albert,
This, from the Count of Wirtemberg, my sov'reign,
With conscious shame I bear. [*Presents a letter.*

ALBERT *(reading the letter and speaking aside).*

What joy for Agnes!—
(Aloud). Elizabeth has chosen for herself.

EMERSHOF.

Unhappily she has.

ALBERT.

Unhappily!
Was she not free to choose, when statesmen's hands
Alone had forg'd tyrannic chains to bind us?—
She knew me not.—

EMERSHOF.

Still, by a solemn contract——

ALBERT.

Perish all contracts which the heart disowns!
Say, hast thou further business?

EMERSHOF.

No, my lord.

VICEROY.

Then leave us, Emershof—we wou'd be private.
[*Exeunt* EMERSHOF *and Attendants.*

VICEROY *(aside).*

Dissimulation aid me now, and mask,
With friendship's specious veil, my secret thoughts!
(Aloud). Thy father, Albert, sends me to awake
Thy dormant courage—to demand thy presence
To-morrow, with the dawn, at Ratisbon;
Where, 'tis his will to hold a Tournament,
In honor of thy kinsman, gallant Thorring;
So newly welcom'd to this peaceful shore,
From Judah's blood-stain'd fields.

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Awake my courage !——
And when was Albert's courage known to sleep ?

VICEROY.

Has not thy sword, for three successive moons,
Lain dormant in it's scabbard ?—O! my friend,
I blush to speak it—but the babbling many,
Call thee the slave—the puppet of a wanton—
The tame obedient bird her toils have caught !

ALBERT,

Infernal slander !—If celestial virtue
E'er came from high to take an earthly form,
She dwells in Agnes' bosom.

VICEROY.

Yet, reflect.—
Does it become the good, the duteous Albert,
To make a parent's waning sun of life
Go down in tears?—O! think! will not his sorrows
Weigh 'gainst the smiles of Agnes——and that grave,
Which yawns to snatch him from thy sight for ever,
'Gainst all her soft endearments ?—Think what tortures
Must writhe his fond paternal heart when Albert,
Albert replete with ev'ry shining virtue
To form the hero and to grace the man,
Prefers loose dalliance and degen'rate sloth
To valour : kindling Tournaments !—

ALBERT.

Take heed !—
If, as I much suspect, this sudden Tourney
Be a mere stratagem to draw me hence
And rob me of my bride———

VICEROY,

VICEROY *(starting)*.

Thy bride! *(Aside.)* Confusion!

ALBERT.

Thou tremblest—and thine eyes flash fire.—

VICEROY.

Nay, then,
My dearest hopes are blasted!

ALBERT.

How!—*Thy* hopes?

VICEROY *(aside)*.

Curse on his piercing looks!—I dare not meet them.—

ALBERT.

What means that quiv'ring lip, that strong emotion,
Which speaks the rival rather than the friend?

VICEROY *(aside)*.

The rival!—hah!—*(Aloud)*. O! prince! and can'st thou wrong
My honest friendship thus?—Cou'd I unmov'd
Hear of an act which threats with deepest woe
Thyself, thy country?—

ALBERT.

If I injure friendship,
Pardon the fault!—Suspicion is a vice
Repugnant to my nature, and I scorn it!—
Yet, caution well becomes the man who guards
A prize like Agnes;—and no coz'ning arts,
Nor e'en a father's dread commands (cou'd Ernest
Command so black a deed), shou'd e'er betray me
To violate my oaths—to stain my conscience—
And leave my wife, my unoffending wife,
A prey to cruel scoffers——

VICEROY.

Then, farewell
Thy vaunted fame in arms!—Our warrior-knights,

When told that Albert basely shuns the Tourney,
Will drop a tear for honor—blush indignant—
And execrate the hour which gave Bavaria
A prince without a soul.

ALBERT.

And shall I place
Sweet virtue on the dang'rous heights of greatness,
(The dreaded heights she oft' essay'd to shun;)
Then swear by right'ous heaven to shelter her
From ev'ry foe, from ev'ry pelting storm;
Shall I do this, and leave her for a phantom,
An empty shade call'd honor?

VICEROY.

Do I live
To hear such words from Albert?—Can a knight
Sprung from the glorious house of Wittelsbach,
O! shame to chivalry! can he call honor
An empty shade?

ALBERT.

He can, my lord.——Nay! start not—
For, whatsoe'er the thoughtless world may say,
Know, that true courage oft' consists in daring
To rise above what falsely we call *honor*,
And meet for conscience' sake the public scorn.

VICEROY.

Unmeaning words!—The common cant of cowards!—

ALBERT.

Cowards!—This is too much!———

VICEROY.

Yes, cowards, Albert!
The knight who shuns a Tourney, brands his name
With hateful cowardice.

ALBERT.

O! I am urg'd
Beyond all mortal bearing!—Heavens! how weak,
How

How variable is man!—Thou'st conquer'd, Vice-
roy.——
This heart, which loaths the tyrant sway of cus-
tom,
Becomes her abject slave!—Go, then—proclaim,
That Albert, ere the dazzling orb of day
Relumes the east—will enter Ratisbon;
To shew, by deeds of arms, that virtuous love
With more than human prowess fires the mind;
And, like resistless ocean, sweeps away
Each obstacle that stems it's fateful course.

VICEROY.

Joy to Bavaria!—Albert, once again,
Shines forth a hero!

ALBERT.

Agnes—dearest Agnes!——

VICEROY.

Thou'lt not recede?

ALBERT.

By this good sword, I will not!
Yet, mark——shou'd treach'ry's hell-born arts
achieve
Aught in my absence 'gainst my lovely bride,
By heaven, I'll loosen from his iron den
The monster death, t'avenge a husband's wrongs!
[*Exit* ALBERT.

VICEROY *(solus)*.

Wou'd I had ne'er beheld this 'witching Agnes,
This syren, whom to see and not to love
Exceeds the power of man!——Yet now, curst
chance!
She is the wife of Albert—nay, of him
Whom long I've call'd my friend.——And can I
then,
O! can I rob him of his heart's best treasure,

Blast all his joys, and make all his life to come
A never-ending blank?—Infernal baseness!——
Yes—I'll forego my purpose——Hah!—forego
it!—
And see this haughty beauty, who with scorn
Return'd my love——see her!——tormenting
thought!—
In a blest rival's arms!——see her exalted
E'en to Bavaria's throne!———But, wou'd our
knights
Pay homage to a base-born girl, whose father
Blushes to own his child?—Forbid it, pride!—
No—sooner far they'd kindle rav'nous flames
Of civil discord thro' the land.——By heaven,
If patriotism only fill'd my soul,
I'd snatch from Albert's view this dang'rous Agnes!
Go then, deluded boy!—and while thy lance
Is idly broken at the sportive Tourney,
My arm shall hew a passage to these towers,
And bear the matchless jewel they infold
Far from thy sight, beyond thy reach for ever!
[*Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

A Court before the Viceroy's Palace at Ratisbon.

THE VICEROY
(Walking up and down, armed for the Tournament).

WHY lingers Oswald, when the am'rous sun
Salutes coy Danube's deeply-blusing waves,
And calls us to the field?

Enter OSWALD.

VICEROY.

Well met—thou'rt tardy.—

OSWALD.

I am the messenger of ill, my lord.

VICEROY.

The messenger of ill?

OSWALD.

Scarce had these lips
Proclaim'd that Albert meant to grace the Tourney,
When Ernest, by proud Thorring's counsels sway'd,
Declar'd his fix'd resolve to bar the lists
'Gainst our heroic prince; unless his Agnes,
His fair seducer, were renounc'd, consign'd
To a drear cloister's walls.

VICEROY.

Accurs'd resolve!
O! Oswald, all my air-built schemes are blasted!
Albert, enrag'd, will hasten back to Agnes,
Ere

Ere friendly darkness aid my daring hand
To seize the wanton beauty.

[*A flourish of trumpets.*

OSWALD.

Hark!—That sound
Invites us to the lists.——

VICEROY.

Weak wav'ring Ernest!
Perdition on the dotard!——But, by heaven,
I'll not be baffled thus!

[*Another flourish of trumpets.*

OSWALD.

Again the trumpet
Chides our delay.

VICEROY.

I come.—O! hell, what tortures
Hast thou compar'd with disappointed love?

[*Exeunt.*

The Scene changes to a Square prepared for a Tournament.

Houses magnificently decorated with the Arms of several Knights.—Persons leaning out of the Windows.—An Amphitheatre for the Duke and his Retinue.—Warlike Music.—The HERALDS *and* MARSHALS *enter, and range near the Barrier.—*ERNEST *advances with his Court, mounts the Amphitheatre, and seats himself—his Train take their places behind him—then enter Knights in Armour, two and two, each followed by his Esquire, and preceded by a Herald bearing a Banner with his Arms emblazoned on it.—*SEYBELSTORF *enters with his Esquire—and after him the* VICEROY *with* OSWALD *as his Esquire.*

—*Lastly,*

—Lastly, a Band of Crusaders enter, led by THORRING.

The Music ceases.

FIRST MARSHAL.

Thorring, brave champion of the sacred cross,
Thou, in whose honor Ernest holds this Tourney,
Ascend yon regal seat.

[THORRING *seats himself next to* ERNEST.

Now give the signal.

The HERALDS *sound their trumpets, and the Tournament commences.—After a short time warlike music is heard—the Combatants pause, and* ALBERT, *with his Retinue, present themselves at the Barrier.*

FIRST MARSHAL (*stopping* ALBERT).

Albert, Count Palatine, forbear to enter.

ALBERT.

Do'st know me?

FIRST MARSHAL.

Yes.—'Gainst thee our lists are barr'd.

ALBERT.

'Gainst me?—Amazement!—But I'll not believe it—
Open the barrier.—

FIRST MARSHAL.

Prince, our laws forbid——

ALBERT.

Perish all laws that wou'd affront my honor!—
Slave, give me way!—Has Albert e'er done aught
Unworthy of his knighthood?

FIRST MARSHAL.

Vicious morals
Degrade the bravest knight.

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

How!—Vicious morals?—
What sland'rous tongue?——

FIRST MARSHAL.

Thou stand'st accus'd of sloth;
Of keeping publicly a base-born wanton.—
Nay, more—'tis rumour'd that thou fain wou'd'st make her
Bavaria's duchess—mother of our princes.—
Wipe off this foul disgrace, this stain to knighthood,
Or enter not these lists.

ALBERT.

Down boiling blood!——
Wer't not to clear my Agnes' injur'd fame,
Albert wou'd scorn to answer—save with this!—
[*shaking his lance.*
Princes and knights attend.—Is it disgraceful,
Whilst all Bavaria tastes the joys of peace—
Peace which my falchion by your aid won for her;
Say, is't disgraceful Albert too shou'd rest
From martial toils, and yield his heart to love?
Is love a stain to knighthood?—Is there one
Of all this band who has not felt it's power?
And when heaven shrines within an angel's shape
An angel's fairer mind, forming the whole
So excellent, that jealous Nature blushes
To see her choicest works so far outshone;
O! is't disgraceful, can it sully knighthood
To worship this divinity on earth?——
Who then is he that durst arraign my conduct,
And slander her I love?—Open the lists——
Or this good lance shall.——
[*He forces open the barrier.*

VICEROY.

How?—Against the marshals?

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Against the world, shou'd it attempt to cast
A slur upon my honor!—Let the man,
The villain who accuses me, stand forth,
And answer with his blood.———

ERNEST *(descending from his throne)*.

I'm thy accuser.

ALBERT *(dropping his lance)*.

Hah!—You, my father!—you!—Can Ernest stain
His son's yet spotless glory?—Stain it too
Before this princely host!——

ERNEST.

Renounce thy Agnes,
Or instant quit the lists.——

ALBERT.

Renounce my Agnes?

ERNEST.

Yes, as thy prince, thy father, I enjoin it!

ALBERT *(to his Esquire)*.

Give me my lance. *(Breaking it)*. Thus, I dissolve the Tourney!
And, whosoe'er attempts to just, that man
Henceforward is my foe. And now, my father,
With kind indulgence hear your son. Behold,
In me, that very Albert who so oft'
Has led your troops to conquest, aw'd rebellion,
E'en by a glance, and fix'd the tott'ring crown
Safe on your honor'd head.—Behold this Albert
Slander'd, degraded, barr'd from martial sports;—
Because he scorn'd to aim at vile seduction—
Because he dar'd t' exert that right which e'en
The lowest slave enjoys—the right to choose
A bride who meets his wishes.

ERNEST.

How!—A bride?—

ALBERT.

Frown not, my father!—O! forgive your son
This first revolt from duty!

ERNEST.

No, with curses——

ALBERT.

Hold, hold!—in mercy, hold!—Cou'd I present
My Agnes to your view, each bitter curse
Which trembles on those lips wou'd turn to blessings
Upon her innocent head!—Nay, for her sake,
You cou'd not, sure, refuse to pardon me.

ERNEST.

Rash headstrong boy!—O! thou hast done a deed———

ALBERT.

A desp'rate deed—a deed inspir'd by love,
Which hearkens to no doubts, which fears no dangers;—
Which bids me, great as is the peril, swear,
That Albert never will forsake his Agnes!

THORRING.

Reflect!—Call back thy words!—Renounce this union!—
The prince who weds beneath the rank of knighthood,
No longer is a prince.

ERNEST.

And, by high heaven,
Albert, united to a base-born girl,
No longer is my son!—Then burst thy fetters,
Or hope not to ascend Bavaria's throne.
No!—

ALBERT.

No!—rather than commit an act so base,
I'll make a ploughshare of this trusty sword,
And breed the sons of Albert humble peasants!

ERNEST.

Degen'rate wretch!—Go, then—resign thy birthright—
Hence, with thy Agnes to some distant realm!

VICEROY *(in a scoffing tone)*.

And when thou'st breath'd thy last on her soft bosom,
And thy pale corse in solemn state is borne
To the drear vault where sleep thy brave forefathers,
We'll raise, in opposition to that stone,
Which speaks the exploits of thy grandsire, Otho,
A monument to thee.——Roses and vines
Shall wreathe it round—two billing doves shall crown it—
And, at it's base, th' historic muse shall lie
Sleeping supine!—then, lest mankind demand
Who Albert was?—the blushing stone shall say,
" Here rests a Wittelsback!"

ALBERT,

Vile scoffer, peace!—
Think'st thou I'll brook thy sneers?

VICEROY.

Thou e'en must brook
The sneers of all the world.——Art thou not cozen'd
By a base wanton?——

ALBERT.

Slave!

THORRING.

Renounce her, Albert!—

SEYBELSTORF.

Renounce her, if you prize Bavaria!—

ALBERT.

Peace!—
Urge me no more.—'Gainst all who breathe this language,
I throw my gauntlet down.
[*Throws down his gauntlet.*

VICEROY.

O! shame to knighthood!
Can Albert draw his sword in such a cause?

ALBERT

(Striking the Viceroy with the flat part of his sword).

Rash fool,
Take that!—Thy sword shall ne'er again
Be drawn in any cause. Henceforth thou'rt outlaw'd
From honor's sacred pale.

ERNEST.

Insolent boy!
Thus I revenge the Viceroy. [*Striking* ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Hell!

ERNEST.

Like him,
Be thou henceforth degraded; rob'd of each
High privilege which appertains to knighthood.

VICEROY *(aside)*.

By heaven, I'll taste a richer vengeance still!
Yes, Albert, now I am thy deadliest foe!
[*Exit* VICEROY.

ALBERT.

Patience, kind Powers!—No—'tis not to be borne——
Vainly I strive to stem the tide of passion
Which

Which rushes o'er my soul.——I *had* a father—
But I have lost him now—and, in his stead,
A flinty-bosom'd despot goads me on
Even to desperation's horrid brink.
[*Loud murmurs.*
Gen'rous Bavarians! do ye pity Albert?
Be then the champions of his cause.——

ERNEST.

My son!
And can'st thou rear rebellion's damned banner
Against thy prince—thy parent?—

ALBERT.

Torture! madness!
Yet, can I brook such usage?—O! my heart
Is agoniz'd indeed!——Love, duty, vengeance,
Each strives for victory—while reason flies
From the too bitter conflict!

ERNEST.

Think!—Repent! [ERNEST *weeps.*
These are no woman's tears.——

ALBERT.

Soul-piercing sight!
O! if you love me, heal my wounded honor;
Acknowledge Agnes as my lawful bride;
And raise a hapless son from mis'ry's depths,
To joy's extatic summit!

ERNEST.

Never, Albert—
Never will Ernest blast his country's glory,
And lift a vile plebeian to the throne.

ALBERT.

O! baleful prejudice!

ERNEST.

Think, think, my son!——

ALBERT.

I dare not think—I dare not look on you!—
Yet, can I part from Agnes?——No—'tis fix'd—
Agnes, or war.——

(Omnes, on ERNEST's *side.)* War, war!

ALBERT.

Then, be it so.
O! do not curse, my father!——Countrymen,
Ye, whom I oft' have taught to guard the rights
Of a still honor'd parent, aid me now
To guard my own!

(Omnes, on ALBERT's *side.)* War, war!

[*Exit* ALBERT, *attended by a considerable train of Knights—the People follow tumultuously.—*ERNEST *and his Counsellors remain confounded.*

ERNEST.

Afflictive sound!
I, of all fathers *was* most blest—and now,
How dreadful is the change!——My son, my Albert,
Thou who first call'd me by the name of parent;
First pledge of my fond love for that dear saint,
Who, by thy birth, grew doubly precious to me;
Wilt thou desert me now, in age desert me;
Cloud the small remnant of my days with sorrow,
And lift thy impious falchion 'gainst my life?

SEYBELSTORF.

It cannot be. When Anger's shades are fled,
Our noble prince will view, with reason's eyes,
That hell-born monster, Filial Disobedience;—
And gladly leave his bride's seductive arms
To chase this fiend away. Besides, can Albert
So tremblingly alive to honor's voice,
Be long insensible to that of duty?

ERNEST.

ERNEST.

Yes, much I fear it——

SEYBELSTORF.

Feeling minds, like his,
Are easily o'ercome.

ERNEST.

Go—try to move him——
Plead for his father—for his country.——Yet,
If the enchantress, Agnes, plead against thee,
What will thy words avail?

THORRING.

Then take her from him.

ERNEST.

Wou'd it were possible!

THORRING.

How!—Possible?—

ERNEST.

Where shall I find the lion-hearted knight
Who dares essay to snatch this fair seducer
From her fond husband's arms?

THORRING.

Behold him here.

ERNEST.

Thorring, my zealous kinsman, wou'd'st thou venture
On this too arduous task?

THORRING.

What task is arduous
With such an end in view?—Shall I, whose blood
Springs from the same pure fountain with thy own,
Shall I endure to see that blood polluted?
No—while I've life, I will not!

ERNEST.

Best of friends!
Yet tho' thy potent arm, in Judah's fields,

So

So oft' has laid th' aspiring crescent low;
Can'st thou, unbrac'd by twenty toilsome years
Of martial strife—thy youthful vigour flown,
Scorch'd up by Asia's suns—can'st thou subdue
The giant-strength of Albert?

THORRING.

Savage force
Shou'd be a last expedient.—I'll employ
A weapon far more prone to conquer—Reason!—

ERNEST.

May bounteous heaven, in mercy, gift thy tongue
With more than mortal eloquence!—Go, Thorring—
Try reason's power—try threats—try wily craft.—
But, lest they all avail not, Straubing's Viceroy
Shall, with my choicest bands, thy steps pursue;
And, if necessity compel, essay
To aid thee by his sword.

SEYBELSTORF.

If I much err not,
The Viceroy, fury flashing from his eyes,
No sooner had receiv'd that madd'ning blow
Impetuous Albert gave him, than, like lightning
He vanish'd from the field.

OSWALD.

I know his course:
Is it my sov'reign's pleasure, I direct it
Towards Albert's castle? [*Going.*

ERNEST.

Hold!—Take my instructions
Ere thou set forth.—O! Thorring, O! my friend,
On thee alone this bursting heart relies!
[*Exeunt Omnes.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

A small Wood on the Banks of the Danube.

AGNES *is discovered in a pensive attitude, leaning against a Tree, and gazing at the River.*

AGNES.

FLOW on, translucent Danube!—Let thy waves
Hasten their happy course to Ratisbon,
And greet my best belov'd!—Does thy calm surface
Reflect my image?—O! preserve it, then!—
Carry it with thee—and when Albert strives
In combat on thy banks, display it to him,
And shew him these big tears which trace each other
Down the pale cheeks of his deserted bride!
O! Love—thou sweet tormentor!—thou, to whom
Our highest joys and keenest griefs we owe!—
Can'st thou restore that downy peace of mind
Which, ere I knew my Albert, blest his Agnes?
When, reckless e'en that I'd a heart to give,
My days, in slow succession, roll'd along,
Unruffled as these waves.—O! Love, restore
This precious peace of mind—or give me back
Him, for whose sake alone I've liv'd, since first
My eyes met his!—Sure he was form'd by heaven
To fill this vacant breast!—and heaven, at length,
Has deign'd to make him mine.—Why, then, this weight

Which presses down my soul?—Can I be guilty?—
Thou know'st, just heaven, what conflicts I've endur'd
'Twixt love and rigid duty.—Oft' these lips
Have pray'd for death, or fortitude to tread
In honor's straightest paths.—But thou'st endow'd me
With all my sex's tenderness, with feelings
Too strong to be subdued—thou'st plac'd before me
Him, who alone cou'd draw those feelings forth.——
And am I guilty because he is great?
Cou'd I, because he is a prince, reject him?

Enter ZENGER.

ZENGER.

Forgive this rude intrusion, royal Agnes——
But Straubing's Viceroy, with impetuous haste,
Demands to see thee.

AGNES.

Straubing's Viceroy?—hah!

ZENGER.

Behold, he's here———

AGNES.

Shield me, benignant powers,
From his detested sight! Means he again
T' insult me with dishonorable love?

Enter THE VICEROY.

VICEROY.

Princess, I bring thee news from Ratisbon.—
News for thy private ear. [*Exit* ZENGER.

AGNES.

AGNES.

From Ratisbon?
Com'st thou from Ratisbon?—Then, e'en thy presence
For once is welcome to these eyes.——O! say,
Does conquest grace my Albert?—Speak!—How fares he?

VICEROY.

Better than perfidy like his deserves.

AGNES.

Perfidy, said'st thou?—Perfidy to whom?
Yet hold—I will not listen to the falsehood.——
Albert perfidious!——No—I'll ne'er believe it.—

VICEROY.

Who, but a fickle, a perfidious boy,
Wou'd leave his bride, his newly wedded bride,
For idle Tourneys?

AGNES.

Honor bade him go.

VICEROY.

Honor, oppos'd to passion's thund'ring voice,
Is heard no more than music's melting tones,
Pour'd in the torpid ear of gloomy deafness.
No—his was transient love—and stronger pride,
Has smother'd the weak flame.—I grieve to speak it—
But Albert, faithless Albert has renounc'd thee.—

AGNES.

Renounc'd me!—Did I hear aright?—Renounc'd me?—

VICEROY.

Cou'd'st thou e'er hope this supercilious boy,
Who fain wou'd make the necks of kings his footstool,

Cou'd'st thou e'er hope he wou'd not blush to own
Plebeian Agnes as Bavaria's princess?

AGNES.

Renounce me?——No!—Cou'd Albert break his vows?—
It cannot be—my heart avers it cannot!—
Still—if a father's dread commands enjoin'd it—

VICEROY.

'Twas pride alone enjoin'd it.—Ernest ne'er
Presumes to thwart his son's imperious will.

AGNES.

If thou speak'st true—which, even yet, I question—
Be merciful, high heaven, and strike me dead!

VICEROY.

If I speak true!—and why shou'd I deceive thee?
Wou'd not a day, perhaps an hour, reveal
The cruel falsehood?

AGNES.

Albert!—ruthless Albert!——

VICEROY.

Give thy tears way.—

AGNES.

Tears!—Does he merit tears
From injur'd Agnes?

VICEROY.

Perfidy like his
Merits thy scorn—nay, calls for vengeance.——

AGNES.

Hah!

VICEROY.

O! had'st thou deign'd to hear my ardent vows!

Had'st

Had'st thou return'd my passion!——

AGNES.

Name it not.

VICEROY.

Yes, I will name it—for I still adore thee——
And had my fond attentions won thy love,
(A blessing 'tis not in the fates to equal),
Thou shou'd'st not now have been despis'd, forsaken,
Left to the scoffs of a malicious world.
But let us shew this base, this faithless, Albert,
That Agnes, howsoe'er his pride disdain her,
Can find protectors princely as himself——
Behold in me——

AGNES.

A villain!——Light breaks in
On my benighted mind.—Yes, thou'rt a villain—
And this infernal tale, by falsehood coin'd,
Was but a stratagem to lure me hence.

THE VICEROY *(seizing her)*.

Nay, then, by other means——

AGNES.

Ruffian, stand off!——
Help!—Mercy!——

VICEROY *(seizing her again)*.

Stop!—Fate gives thee to my wishes—
And, come what may, I'll keep my beauteous prize.

AGNES.

Consummate villain!—Sure thou can'st not mean it.——

VICEROY.

Not mean it—by the powers of heaven I do!

AGNES.

AGNES.

Nam'st thou those powers?—I fear thou'rt so corrupt
Thou dost defy the majesty of heaven.——
Yet know, presumptuous mortal, deeds like thine
Draw vengeance from above, t' appal the vicious,
And make the virtuous tremble and adore.—

VICEROY.

Think'st thou to frighten me with idle tales
Coin'd by inventive priestcraft?—My firm soul
Rises above all fear—and dares to grasp
Substantial happiness, love's rapt'rous joys,
Tho' envious priests shou'd damn me for the act!

AGNES.

Off!—Let me pass!—or, thou shalt quickly learn,
My soul is fearless as thy own—my honor,
Than life itself more dear!

VICEROY.

Thou talk'st it bravely—
I'll prove this vaunted courage.—Sandizell!—

Enter THE VICEROY'S *Attendants.*

See'st thou my power?

AGNES.

I know thy weakness, ruffian!
And trust in the superior power of heaven.

VICEROY.

Thy trust is vain. *(Bugle-horns sound.)* Confusion!

AGNES.

Ecstacy!
Heard ye these sounds?—My Albert comes—
(To the VICEROY.*)*—Thou'rt pale!——

Where

Where now is all thy fearlessness?—Fall down,
And ask the earth to cover thee.

VICEROY *(aside)*.

O! hell!
Do'st cheat thy servants thus? *(Aloud.)* Yet, mark me, Agnes!
If thou shou'd'st breathe in any human ear
What fierce despairing love has made me utter,
By heaven! I'll rest not till this sword is buried
In my curst rival's heart!—He comes.——Remember!——

[*Exeunt the* VICEROY, *and his Attendants.*

AGNES *(sola)*.

Villain, infernal villain!—Kill my Albert!
Is there a danger that I wou'd not brave
To guard his precious life?—

Enter ALBERT *armed, and followed by the Knights who espoused his cause at the Tournament;—they pass slowly across the Stage, while he runs toward* AGNES *and embraces her.*

ALBERT.

My love! my Agnes!

AGNES.

My lord, my guardian angel, welcome!——welcome!—
Most welcome!——O!—support me!——

ALBERT.

Heavens!—she faints!—
Curse on my eager haste!—Look up, dear saint,
Look up, and bless thy Albert!

AGNES.

Pardon me——
Pardon this weakness!—The surprize—the joy—

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Rather let me implore thy pardon Agnes,
For rushing thus abruptly to thy arms.—
But inconsiderate love——

AGNES.

No!—heaven, my Albert,
Gave swiftness to thy steps.—But say, what cause
Drew thee from Ratisbon!

ALBERT.

Enquire not——

AGNES.

Hah!

ALBERT.

I will not damp our present joys——

AGNES.

What mean'st thou?
Why come those warrior-bands?—O! tell me, Albert!—
Is there a torture equal to suspense?

ALBERT.

They come to guard my rights—by war to guard them.—

AGNES.

War!—Against whom?

ALBERT.

Against my father.——

AGNES.

Horror!

ALBERT.

Agnes, I'm branded by a shameful blow—
Debarr'd each privilege of knighthood—nay,
Excluded from the throne!

AGNES.

And all for me?
Is this th' effect of our unhappy union?

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Unhappy, Agnes?—Call it not unhappy!

AGNES.

No—rather let us call it criminal—
For, when we wedded, filial duty frown'd,
Fierce discord clapp'd her hands, and hell rejoic'd!

ALBERT.

Say, rather, when we wedded virtue smil'd,
To see the best, the loveliest of her offspring,
Subdue the demon prejudice, and vault
To grandeur's topmost heights.

AGNES.

Does virtue smile,
When sons against their parents dare to lift
Rebellion's impious sword?—O! let me die,
Rather than stain thy bosom with such crimes
As candour's self wou'd shudder e'en to think of!

ALBERT.

Can it in candour's eyes be deem'd a crime
To guard my wife from insult?

AGNES.

By such means
A heinous crime—heavens! shall thy bridal torch
Illume the rav'nous flames of civil-war?
Shall I precipitate to deepest hell
The man in whom my doating mind inhabits?
Shall I shoot adders thro' his tortur'd soul,
And plunge him 'mid blue floods of liquid fire,
Where parricides lie howling?

ALBERT.

O! forbear!
Thou'rt guiltless, white as innocence herself!—

'Tis cruel pride, by court-intrigues spurr'd on,
Whose rage has sent infernal discord forth,
To drench the realm in blood.——Shall I, whose arm
Has oft' preserv'd our crazy state from ruin,
Shall I, without whose succour haughty Ernest
Had been a wand'ring exile at this hour;
Shall I, because he frowns, discard my Agnes,
Her, whom in conscience I am bound to love?—
No—not the heaviest strokes of adverse fortune;
Not all the strength of chivalry conjoin'd;
Nor the loud thunders of high heaven itself,
(Cou'd heaven in so unjust a cause take part),
Shou'd now divide me from thee!

AGNES.

O! too late,
With terror, with distraction I behold
The train of ills our fatal union genders!
Yet, tho' all potent love's seductive voice,
In spite of judgment, urg'd me to be thine,
I ne'er had done a deed so big with danger
Had'st thou not sworn, thou knew'st thy father's heart
Relenting, kind——

ALBERT.

Such were my hopes——

AGNES.

Alas!
Those flattering hopes are fled!—My lord, my love!—
I know not how to speak it——Gracious powers,
Steel this weak mind with firmness!

ALBERT.

Heavens! what mean'st thou?
What

What dreadful purpose labours in thy breast,
And chokes thy words with anguish?

AGNES *(after a pause)*.

Duty, Albert,
Has triumph'd over love.—And, by my hopes,
My precious hopes of joining thee hereafter,
In worlds where angry parents cease to frown,
I swear, if (breaking nature's strongest ties),
Thou 'gainst a father draws rebellion's sword,
I'll instant quit thy sight——for ever——

ALBERT.

Hold!
O! blast me not!——

AGNES.

Yes—in yon cloister's gloom,
Agnes shall hide her miseries for ever;—
And, by incessant orisons, avert,
(If it may be), the righteous wrath divine
From bursting on thy head.—O! yet reflect!—
Ernest is still thy father!——

ALBERT.

Thou hast conquered.—
Farewell each thought of war!—Farewell to all
The dazzling greatness of my life's first spring!
Beneath my feet I'll spurn Bavaria's sceptre,
And found my empire in thy angel heart!

AGNES.

Are there not debts which princes owe their country?
And is not honor wounded till they're paid?

ALBERT.

The world's my country—and the only honor
Hard fate has left me, is my right in thee—

Then rob me not of that—but let us speed
To some blest clime where nature's laws bear rule;
And, in the tranquil walks of private life,
Taste joys which fly the precincts of a throne.

AGNES.

What?—Can'st thou leave Bavaria?—leave thy country?
Forsake thy father, when the hand of death
Shall threat him hard—as very soon it must do—
Leave him, by filial tenderness unsooth'd,
Struggling with dire disease and racking throes—
Leave him to ope his darkening eyes in vain,
Nor find his son, his Albert, watching near him?—
Can'st thou do this?—

ALBERT.

O, torture!—killing torture!—

AGNES.

Can'st thou entail a dying parent's curse
Not only on ourselves, but on our children?

ALBERT.

Hold!—Drive me not to madness!—

AGNES.

Let us part—

ALBERT.

Part, said'st thou?—O, all hell is in the sound!
Part from Agnes!—Art thou not to me
Friends, father, country, all united?—Part!—
Sooner yon sun shall leave the course assign'd him
By fate-compelling heaven!

Enter ZENGER.

ZENGER.

A knight, my lord,
Brings this from royal Ernest, and desires
Admission to thy presence. [*Presents a letter.*

AGNES *(aside)*.

Gracious powers,
Make him the blessed harbinger of peace,
E'en tho' my blood shou'd follow!——

ALBERT *(perusing the letter)*.

Hah!—I hop'd not
For tidings such as these—Ernest relents—
Urges to see me—and declares his wish
To heal my wounded honor.—

AGNES.

Joy!—

ALBERT.

And yet,
He asks, implores to have my troops disbanded,
Disbanded instantly——I like not this.——

AGNES.

When parents sue, what child can be obdurate?
Thou can'st not—sure thou can'st not—O, my lord,
Woud'st thou preserve me thine, repair to Ernest—
Think of my vow—I've sworn to keep it, Albert—

ALBERT.

Rash, cruel Agnes!—Yet, to leave thee here—
Without protection too!——Instruct me heaven!
(To ZENGER*)*. Said'st thou who brought this letter?

ZENGER.

Gallant Thorring——
Pardon thy vassal's forward zeal, my prince,
But, wou'd *he* deign to stay an hostage here
Till thou return'st——

ALBERT.

Blest thought!—Conduct me to him.

Go—

AGNES.

Go—Whilst I seek yon consecrated pile,
Whose stately arches cast a tranquil awe
O'er the rapt soul—there, at the altar's foot,
I'll meekly supplicate all-ruling heaven,
To quench the kindling sparks of civil war,
And soothe this anguish'd heart with sounds of peace. [*Exeunt severally.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

The Viceroy's Tent, embosomed by thick Woods.

THE VICEROY, *solus.*

If there be evil spirits who send forth torments
To agonize mankind, I do believe
The deadliest of the group is jealousy!
At her approach our very nature changes,
Love turns to rage—friendship to blackest hate—
Benevolence and mercy flee away—
Leaving the mind of man a perfect hell,
Fit only for revenge to occupy.
And when a favour'd rival dares to add
Insult—th' opprobious insult of a blow—
To jealousy's fierce tortures—patience' self
Loses her name, and burns with savage fury.
Come then, revenge! grim demon whet the sword,
By royal Ernest to my guidance trusted,
Teach me to storm yon castle's massy towers,
And seize, with eager grasp, their peerless treasure!

Enter OSWALD.

OSWALD.

My lord, kind fortune waits upon our wishes—
I've learnt, from Thorring, Albert, ere an hour,
Will speed to Ratisbon.——The rebel-knights,
Sworn to abet his quarrel, are dismiss'd,
Save fifty, who remain to guard the princess!

VICEROY.

VICEROY.

Didst thou tell Thorring, 'tis the will of Ernest
I bear to Straubing this pernicious Agnes?

OSWALD.

I did——but Ernest had himself made known
His letter so directed you.

VICEEROY.

'Tis well.

OSWALD.

And if, by soft persuasion's honied voice,
Thorring shou'd fail to tempt the princess hither
Before yon clock beats ten; he will expect
You storm the castle.

VICEROY.

And I'll do't, or perish!
Meantime, we'll pace the outskirts of this wood,
To keep our ambush'd bands from straying hence,
Till night's impervious mantle hide their numbers.
[*Exeunt.*

The Scene changes to a Hall in Albert's Castle.

AGNES *discovered in a pensive attitude.*—ZENGER *attending.*

AGNES.

He's gone—tis well—the dreadful conflict's past—
Virtue still triumphs over love, and conscience
Sheds an approving smile—then, wherefore sinks
This weak, this coward heart?—Albert is happy—
Joy-kindling hope impels his course—he feels not
The dark presages which destroy my peace.

ZENGER.

ZENGER.

Why presage ill?—My watchful caution, princess,
Shall be thy sure defence.

AGNES.

My sure defence!
Vaunt not, presumptious man—The fate of Agnes
Is register'd above—and mortal foresight
In vain essays to 'scape th' unerring stroke
Of heaven-directed destiny.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

My lord,
Thy royal hostage, venerable Thorring,
Demands to see the princess.

AGNES.

Wherefore this?

OFFICER.

He bears a message—as he says, a kind one—
From our dread sov'reign—

AGNES.

Albert nam'd it not.

OFFICER.

He knew it not; for Ernest had enjoin'd
It shou'd be mentioned to thyself alone.

AGNES.

(To ZENGER*).* Shall I comply?

ZENGER.

'Twere wise——

AGNES.

(To the Officer). Admit the warrior.
[*Exit Officer.*

ZENGER.

Hear him—but answer boldly—and forget not,
Zenger commands a band of chosen heroes,
Who pant to draw their swords in beauty's cause.
[*Exit* ZENGER.

AGNES *(sola)*.

O! let me now recall my scatter'd reason,
That I may act becoming Albert's wife!

Enter THORRING, *introduced by* ZENGER, *who immediately withdraws.*

THORRING,
(Gazing at AGNES, *and then speaking aside).*

Heavens! what an angel form! what majesty!—
Surprize arrests my tongue!—

AGNES *(aside)*.

His hairs are bleach'd
By the chill hand of time.—Life's toilsome journey
Must sure have taught him what affliction is,
And op'd his soul to pity.

THORRING.

Beauteous Agnes,
Thou know'st by whose behest I come?—

AGNES.

I do—
And wait the orders of my prince with trembling.

THORRING.

I bring no orders.—Ernest is no tyrant——
He sends thee counsel, not commands—and who
Can counsel Agnes better than her prince,
The ruler of her fate?

AGNES.

Heaven holds that office,
And

And heaven alone!—But speak my sov'reign's pleasure.

THORRING *(aside)*.

She awes my very soul!— *(Aloud)*. Thy gracious sov'reign,
(Let me repeat it), orders not, but counsels.—
Will Agnes then deign to reveal her hopes,
Her expectations——think me not officious——
Her heart to Thorring?

AGNES.

Yes—for Agnes fears not
T' expose her heart to the great King of Kings—
And shall she veil it from a mortal's view?

THORRING *(aside)*.

Albert, I blame thee not. *(Aloud)*. Say, then, who art thou?
Whom do'st thou think thyself?

AGNES.

My sainted mother
Sprang from plebeian blood.——My sire, alas!
I never knew!—he scorn'd to own his child—
Nay, ere my birth, forsook his faithful bride,
To war 'gainst infidels on Judah's plains.

THORRING *(aside)*.

Obtrusive memory, avaunt!

AGNES.

For dower
Heaven gave me nought save innocence—yet heav'n
Has made me Albert's wife.

THORRING.

And Albert's princess?—

AGNES.

No—that's a title Ernest and Bavaria

Alone can give—an empty title that,
Compar'd with the blest name of Albert's wife!

THORRING.

Art thou his *lawful* wife?

AGNES.

Wou'd he deceive me?

THORRING.

Are princes free to wed like private men?
Can Albert's will annihilate the laws
Of knighthood and Bavaria?—'Till it can,
No prince to one of low degree is wedded,
Tho' priests shou'd hear and ratify his vows.

AGNES.

How?—Am I married, and yet not a wife?—
Alas! what am I then?—

THORRING.

The luckless object
Of a disastrous passion—which, 'gainst reason,
'Gainst duty militates.—Nay, weep not, Agnes.—
Thy tears unman me.—O! relinquish Albert—
Subdue thy fatal love!—and thou may'st still
Awaken from delusive dreams of joy
To real happiness.

AGNES.

Did'st thou e'er love?
And, if thou had'st a wife, wou'd'st thou forsake her?

THORRING.

Spare me!—Ah! spare me!——

AGNES.

Have I wrung thy heart?
Forgive me, venerable man!—But think,
Wou'd it be *happiness* to violate
My nuptial vows?—Wou'd it be *happiness*

For

For ever to renounce my bosom's idol?
And O! cou'd Agnes bear to live dishonour'd,
Repudiated, scoff'd at by the world?—
The harsh unfeeling world!——

THORRING *(aside)*.

Why am I doom'd
To blast her hopes for ever?--*(Aloud)*. Royal Ernest
Has sworn (perhaps too rashly), that he'll wage
War 'gainst thy Albert, war eternal, rather
Than call a low-born fair Bavaria's princess.—
Nay, more—with grief I tell thee—but thy marriage
Is deem'd a crime against the state.—Too soon
Thou'lt be compell'd to endure a public trial.

AGNES.

No—this full heart will burst, and give me death—
Most welcome death!—For know, 'twas my resolve,
Long ere I view'd thy face—my fix'd resolve—
That Agnes ne'er shou'd kindle impious war
'Twixt Albert and his sov'reign.

(The clock strikes ten).

THORRING.

Hark!——That sound
To thee is fatal.——*(Aside)*. By high heaven, I shudder,
As tho' it were my knell!

AGNES.

Fatal!

THORRING.

Alas!
It calls a mighty host to storm thy castle—
Load thee with ignominious chains—and bear thee
To Straubing's dungeons.

AGNES.

AGNES.

Straubing's?——

THORRING.

Yes—the Viceroy
Leads Ernest's forces on——

AGNES.

The Viceroy?——Horror!
O! if thou knew'st the Viceroy!——if thou knew'st——
(Aside). I dare not speak it——Albert, dearest Albert!
Did he not threat thy life if I betray'd him?
What refuge have I then?—Death, death alone!
(Aloud). Thorring, if pity ever touch'd thy soul,
Bless me with instant death——strike here——

THORRING.

Thou'rt frantic!

AGNES *(kneeling).*

O! no!—Thus humbly at thy feet I bend,
An ope' this tortur'd breast———

(On throwing her upper garment aside, she discovers a picture on her bosom).

THORRING *(starting).*

Amazement!——Speak!——
How cam'st thou by that picture?

AGNES.

Why those tears?
Knew'st *thou* departed Blanch?—Knew'st *thou* my mother?—

THORRING.

Thy mother?——Blanch thy mother?——
Wond'rous powers!——
Give me the picture!——*(She gives it to him).*

AGNES.

AGNES.

Hah!—Thy words——thy looks——
A thought occurs——

THORRING.

It is, it is my wife!

AGNES.

Am I awake?—May I believe my senses?——

THORRING.

Yes, thou'rt my child!—my long neglected child!—
O! take me to thy heart!—Forgive me, Agnes!—

AGNES *(falling on his neck).*

Forgive thee!—Transport! ecstacy!——Now, Albert,
We may be blest on earth! *(Trumpets, drums, and a violent clashing of swords).* Defend us, heaven!

Enter ZENGER *and Knights, with drawn swords.*

ZENGER.

Fly, princess, fly!—Treach'ry assails thy life!—
The Viceroy, thro' a sally-port, has burst
Like thunder on the castle; murd'ring all
Who dare t' impede his course.

AGNES.

Relentless bloodhound!
O! we are lost!

THORRING.

Dismiss thy fears, my Agnes—
I'll hasten to him——
(Going, and drawing his sword).

AGNES.

Stop!—Forsake me not!—
I'll die upon thy bosom.——
(She throws herself into his arms).

Enter

Enter THE VICEROY, *followed by* OSWALD *and a large number of Soldiers.*

THE VICEROY
(Seeing AGNES *in the arms of* THORRING*).*

Hell and furies!
Another paramour!—Dissembling villain!
Was it for this thou cam'st to Albert's towers?
Take thy reward!
(Rushing upon him sword in hand).

AGNES.

Hold!—Mercy!—mercy!—O!——
(She faints).

VICEROY.

Now, Oswald, seize her.—

THORRING.

Stop!—Forbear, forbear!—
O! hear me!—Thou'rt deluded——

VICEROY.

Thus, I hear thee!
(THE VICEROY *again attacks* THORRING.—OSWLAD *repulses* ALBERT'S *Knights, and carries away* AGNES.—ZENGER *hastens after her.*—THORRING *falls.).*

VICEROY.

Vict'ry!—Die, wretch!—The lovely prize is mine!
[*Exit.*

THORRING.

O! stop!—He heeds me not.——Agnes, my child!—
And must I lose thee thus?—must thou be loaded
With galling chains—arraign'd—perhaps condemn'd—
E'en for asserting thou art mine—distraction!—
Whilst I lie gasping here?—Yes, I deserve
The

The bitter chastisement.——Infernal pride,
Hell's best assistant! thou hast plung'd me deep
In damning guilt—for thou alone impell'd me
To leave my tender wife, my babe unborn
To poverty and insult.——Heaven is just—
Yet heaven is merciful—and wou'd the hand,
Th' avenging hand which tears my Agnes from me,
Hold in this ebbing life till I proclaim her
A princess worthy Albert's nuptial bed,
Then I cou'd die in peace.

Enter ZENGER.

ZENGER.

She's gone—torn from us!—
Alas! my lord!—your lips are pale——

THORRING *(attempting to rise).*

Support me!——(ZENGER *raises him).*
Bind up my wounds—and, if you love the princess,
Bear me, while sense remains—bear me to Ernest.—
Her peace, her happiness, her very being,
All rest on me.—

ZENGER.

Haste then!—for, shou'd she perish,
Justice wou'd hide her head, and angels weep!

[*Exit* THORRING, *supported by* ZENGER.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

A Dungeon at Straubing.

AGNES *is discovered loaded with fetters.—One Lamp at the end of the Dungeon casts at intervals a dim light upon her.—She is seated on a beam, to which are chains are fastened.*

AGNES.

Have I indeed a father—or, has fancy
With baseless visions fill'd my brain?——O, no,
He own'd me for his child!——My lord, my Albert,
Wou'd thou could'st share my transports!—Transports, said I?—
Is this a place for transports;—are these chains
The garb of joy?——Horror! o'erwhelming horror!—
Does not the fiend-like Viceroy lord it here
With regal sway?——The very thought is madness!———
What noise was that?—O, how my soul sinks in me!
Sure echo's voice conveys thro' yon dark vaults
The sound of gliding footsteps.—At this hour,
When pitchy darkness shrouds the silent world,
Hell sends her creatures forth.———*(A noise of doors opening.—*AGNES *falls on her knees.)*
Defend me, heaven!
Preserve my honor, or, in mercy crop
My thread of being short!

Enter

Enter THE VICEROY.

(AGNES *starts up with looks of horror.)*

VICEROY.

Why thus appal'd?——
If 'twas for life those lips petition'd heaven,
I come to give it.———

AGNES.

Do my ears deceive me?
May I believe?

VICEROY.

What mayst thou not believe
Of love like mine?—Yes, Agnes! tho' with taunts
My vows have been repaid——tho' war-worn Thorring
To me has been preferred—I come to strike
These heavy irons off—nay more, to save thee
From ignominious death.

(He takes off her fetters.)

AGNES.

I'm lost in wonder!
But say—what terms——

VICEROY.

Requite my ardent passion,
And thou shalt change this terror-kindling cell
For smiling bowers, impervious to the view
Of jealousy herself.—A chosen escort
Waits to conduct thee hence.—Then, pause not, Agnes—
Fly to th' asylum my fond love provides,
Ere our assembling council summon thee.——

AGNES.

Traitor, insult me not!—I'll hear no more!—
Know'st thou to whom thou speak'st?

VICEROY.

Audacious girl!
Know I to whom I speak?—Did I not find thee
Lock'd in the arms of Thorring, when the farewell
Bestow'd on him thou feign'st to love on Albert,
Still hung upon thy lips?

AGNES.

Beware, beware!
That I love Albert, let those fetters witness—
That I love Thorring, is my pride, my glory.

VICEROY.

Shame on thy wanton sex!—Vile rank as thine
Turns mercy's self to rigour.

AGNES.

Is't a vice
To hang upon the bosom of a parent—
A parent newly found?—

VICEROY.

Thou rav'st!

AGNES.

Alas!
Too well I know t' expect belief were vain,
For I've no voucher here—save conscious heaven!
Yet, sure as Agnes is the bride of Albert,
She is the child of Thorring.

VICEROY.

Hah!

AGNES.

Dost tremble?

VICEROY, *(aside)*.

Thorring her father!—Thorring whose heart's blood
This thirsty sword has drunk!—I shudder.——Hence,
Imaginary fears!—It cannot be—

Nay,

Nay, were it so, his tongue, ere now, is silenc'd—
He cannot prove it——I'm myself again.

AGNES.

And have I struck thee mute?

VICEROY.

With wonder, sorc'ress,
At lies so palpable.—But think not thus
Thou shalt elude my grasp—for, wert thou sprung
From our great empire's Lord, by heaven, I'd seize
And force thee to be mine!—Aye, grind thy teeth—
Dart fury from thy eyes—Resistance, Agnes,
Adds flames to my fierce love.

[AGNES *throwing herself upon his neck.*

Then thus I quench them.

(As he is going to return her caresses, she draws his sword and breaks from him.)

VICEROY.

Confusion!

AGNES.

Now, curst ruffian, dread my fury!
This arm, by desperation nerv'd, shall prove,
That innocence, though compass'd round with dangers,
Can still protect itself.

VICEROY.

And am I baffled
By a weak woman's arts?—I'll not endure it—

AGNES.

Then, die—

[VICEROY, *retreating and speaking aside.*

That steel with which I murdered Thorring,
Seems, in her hand, th' avenging sword of heaven!
(To AGNES.
Yet, deign to hear me!

AGNES.

AGNES.

Grov'ling coward, hence!
Hence, or this falchion——

VICEROY.

Nay, then—one resource
Alone remains.—Now, Agnes, dread my vengeance! [*Exit the* VICEROY.

AGNES, (*solus*).

At length, I breathe with freedom!—Bounteous powers,
Ye, who have snatch'd me from a tyger's grasp,
Accept my grateful thanks!—and yet—new horror!—
Shou'd I be sentenc'd, by this raging savage,
To ignominious death, cou'd Albert bear
The stinging obloquy!—My father too——
Distraction!——Hah!—That sword would set me free
From ev'ry woe.——Thou friend of sorrow, come!—
Despair shall guide thee.——Let me pause awhile——
Where, then, would be my confidence in heaven?
Where the bright prospect of a blest hereafter?
O, can I hope the Judge of human kind
Will pardon those who basely leave their post
At the great hour of trial?——Were I prone
To speculate on things so far beyond me,
I shou'd believe that they who dare to quench
The vital spark within them, ne'er again
Will have that spark relum'd; but lie, for ever,
The senseless clod their fatal rashness made them.—
Dreadful reverse from that ecstatic joy
Which the pure mind may hope to taste in heaven!

Enter

Enter an OFFICER *and* GUARDS.

OFFICER.

Lady, th' assembled counsellors of Straubing
Demand their pris'ner.

AGNES.

Lead me forth—I go
With innocence alone to plead my cause.
[*Exit* AGNES, *guarded.*

The Scene changes to a Court of Justice.

A long Table with lighted Candles—A regal Chair for the VICEROY *at the end nearest to the Audience—another chair at the top of the Table for the* PRESIDENT—*The* VICEROY *four* BURGOMASTERS, *and twelve* COUNSELLORS *seated.—A* REGISTER-CLERK *(with writing implements) seated at the end of the Table.*

VICEROY.

Formalities, my noble friends, are needless,
When Ernest and when wisdom ask dispatch.

PRESIDENT.

Shall justice be precipitated, Viceroy?

VICEROY.

How, President?—And comprehend'st thou not
The meaning couch'd beneath our sov'reign's orders?
Art thou to learn, that 'tis *implied* commands
Princes require most speedily fulfil'd?

PRESIDENT.

Thou speak'st a mournful truth.—Yet fain I'd hope
Our sov'reign is more merciful, more just
Than

Than thou believ'st.—Let this dang'rous beauty
Be to conventual bonds be ever doom'd;
But rob her not of life.

VICEROY, *(rising and speaking aside).*

My pains, I find,
Were not superfluous.—Had I fail'd t' ensure
One half the voices, she had yet been safe!

PRESIDENT.

If we spill blood, 'twill stain the hands which shed it.

VICEROY.

Far otherwise if justice strikes the blow.
Who waits there? *(Enter an Officer.)*
Haste—conduct your pris'ner hither.
[*Exit* OFFICER.

The VICEROY *coming forward, and speaking aside.*

Yes—she must die!—Her death alone secures
My honor and my life—for, shou'd she prove
Ill-fated Thorring's child—and that she will
Something within me whispers—wou'd she not
Hurl hottest bolts of vengeance on the man who
Has insulted her; and kill'd her father?—
Most sure she wou'd—O, vice, encroaching fiend,
When once thou'rt suffer'd to corrupt our nature,
How, step by step, thou lead'st us on to crimes
Which we, at first, had shudder'd e'en to think of!——

(AGNES *is brought in guarded—The Judges gaze at her—The* VICEROY *continues speaking, and does not observe her entrance).*

Still, when thus urg'd by dire necessity—
When there's no other way to 'scape detection—

PRESIDENT.

PRESIDENT.

My lord, the pris'ner's here.——Know'st thou
fair Agnes,
Why before this tribunal thou art summon'd?

AGNES.

Tribunals, such as this, can plead no right
T' arraign my conduct—Royal Ernest only,
And the great King of Kings possess that power.

PRESIDENT.

We are the representatives of Ernest—
By his command we call thee to this bar.

AGNES.

Not Ernest's self can give his subjects licence
T' arraign the wife of Albert, of their prince.

PRESIDENT.

Bavaria's laws acknowledge no plebeian
As Albert's wife.

AGNES.

Agnes is no plebeian;
She boasts the illustrious blood of Wittelsback—

PRESIDENT.

Thou'rt frantic.——Fear disturbs thy reason.

AGNES.

No——
Behold, in me, the child of royal Thorring——

VICEROY.

Shameless imposter!—Think not by such arts
To baffle justice.—Thou the child of Thorring!—
Confess thy guilt—call him thy paramour!
Nor thus, by damning falsehoods, urge thy fate.

AGNES.

Traitor, shall thy envenom'd tongue 'gain
credence,
And drown the voice of truth?—O, Counsellors,
I cou'd unfold a tale!——

VICEROY.

Remember, Agnes——

AGNES *(aside)*.

Dear Albert! shall I, then, to save myself
Endanger thee?—O, no! that villain's threats
Still vibrate on my ears?

VICEROY.

Guilt strikes her dumb——
Why shou'd we trifle longer?—Is't not clear
Her curst allurements have seduc'd our prince
To treason and revolt?—Is there a medium
Between her instant death and civil war?
Then if you love your sov'reign, if you wish
To save your parent-land from ruin's jaws,
Place 'twixt deluded Albert and that wanton
A barrier insurmountable——a world!

PRESIDENT (*to Agnes.*)

Hast thou ought more to offer?

AGNES.

Nought, save this:
Ye may assassinate—but legally
Ye cannot take my life.——Remember, judges,
I am a princess born, and Albert's bride.
Protect my innocence, or learn to tremble——
Agnes has an avenger in the skies!

PRESIDENT.

Judges, let all who deem the pris'ner guilty
Hold up their hands.—*(The President and seven Counsellors hold up their hands).*
Hah!——Equal!——

VICEROY.

'Tis mine then to determine.—Let her die.
(The Court rises—several of the Counsellors shed tears.)

AGNES.

AGNES *(to the Counsellors.)*
And must I die?—Is there no mercy?

VICEROY.
None.

AGNES.
O, Albert, if thou knew'st my fate!—The angel
Who watches o'er thy peace, will surely breathe it
In thy astounded ear, and bid thee fly,
Swift as the bolts of heaven, to blast that traitor,
And snatch thy Agnes from the yawning grave!

VICEROY.
Haste!—take her hence!—lead her to instant fate!—
And, as our law directs, be Danube's waves
Her passport to the dreaded world unknown.

AGNES.
O, justice! justice! whither art thou fled?
Why speak'st thou not in thunder?——

VICEROY.
Hence!—Dispatch!—(AGNES *is led off guarded—the Counsellors follow.)*
Insensate girl! now rue my love despis'd,
And call, in vain, on Albert to protect thee!—
Yet, lest her syren charms shou'd even melt
The flinty rabble into dang'rous softness,
I'll 'tend her execution.—Hah!—What's this?—
What airy spectre skims before my eyes,
And bars my way?——'Tis he!—the murder'd Thorring!—
He points to hell, and shakes a reeking sword!
See how his wounds spout out a crimson stream!—
I freeze with horror.——Hence, terrific shade!
Thou com'st too late—impede me not.——'Tis gone!

Enter OSWALD.

OSWALD.

Know'st thou, my lord, the pris'ner is led forth?

VICEROY.

Did'st thou see nothing at thy entrance, Oswald?

OSWALD.

Nothing.——But why those haggard looks?

VICEROY.

I tremble——
Give me thy hand.—Is't not too late for mercy?—

OSWALD.

Too late for mercy?—No—

VICEROY.

Slave, hold thy peace!
Wou'd not her life be certain death to me?
Lead on.——Now vengeance arm this coward soul! [*Exeunt omnes.*

The Scene changes to the Banks of the Danube.

Sun-rise.

*A magnificent Bridge cross the River.—A dead march at a distance—as the sound approaches, Soldiers enter, two and two—they station themselves at the foot of the Bridge.—The President and Counsellors enter—Soldiers follow—*AGNES, *with her hands bound, appears in the midst of them, attended by a crowd of People.*

AGNES.

Whither, Bavarians, whither do ye lead me?
O! spare the wife of Albert! of that prince
Whose matchless prowess and exalted virtues
Ensure your welfare, and demand your love—
Your fondest love!——Then save his guiltless bride—

Save

Save her from death—from ignominious death!
You weep, Bavarians—*you*, who ne'er beheld,
'Till this dread hour, the hapless form of Agnes!—
How, then, will Albert weep!——

Omnes. Save her!—O! save her!

Enter THE VICEROY, *attended.*

VICEROY.

What?—Save a wanton!—a plebeian-girl!
A vile enchantress, whose resistless arts
Have lur'd our prince to point rebellion's steel
Against his king, his father?—While she lives
Sweet peace will fly the land——then let her perish!——
Drag her to instant fate!

(The Guards seize AGNES, *and force her towards the Bridge.)*

AGNES.

Bavarians, hold!
If youth—if innocence—if love for Albert—

VICEROY.

Slaves, plunge her down!——

(A flourish of drums and trumpets).

What means this tumult?——hah!

Enter ALBERT, *with a Band of Knights.*

ALBERT *(rushing towards* AGNES*).*

Do I preserve thee?—Am I not too late?—
Intoxicating joy!

AGNES.

My lord! my husband!
My guardian-angel!

VICEROY.

Part them——Straubing's laws
Doom her to instant death.

ALBERT.

ALBERT.

Then wretch die thou,
A sacrifice to injur'd justice!——Seize him!
(Guards approach to seize the VICEROY).

VICEROY.

Traitors, respect your Viceroy!—

ALBERT.

Seize him, comrades,
And plunge him in yon flood. *(Knights seize him).*

VICEROY.

O! mercy, mercy!—
Think of my crimes—my unrepented crimes!—
(They drag him to the Bridge). I have no hope in heaven—and must I—
(They force him off the Stage).

ALBERT.

Go—
And meet that fate thou wou'd'st have dealt to virtue.
(Acclamations). Thanks, kind Bavarians!—Yet restrain your joy—
See there, see there!———

Enter THORRING, *in a litter, borne by Soldiers;* ERNEST *and his Retinue following.*

AGNES.

My father!——Killing sight!

THORRING,

A little further still.—Support me, soldiers—
Bear me to her dear arms.—*(They assist him to get out of the litter).*—My child—my Agnes!—
(She runs to support him).
I come to bless thee with my latest breath——

AGNES.

He sinks—he falls!—Cold clammy dews hang on him!—

His

His limbs are all convuls'd!—Help!—Mercy!—
Help!—

THORRING.

No—help were vain.——This wound——

AGNES.

What hand accurs'd?——

THORRING.

The Viceroy——

AGNES.

Horror!—Then to rescue me,
Thy precious blood was shed.—Distracting torture!—
Am I my father's murdress?

ALBERT.

Calm thy woe.
See'st thou not heaven's peculiar providence
In what has chanc'd, my Agnes?—Thou'rt no more
Than the barb'd arrow in the archer's hand.

THORRING.

Too well I merit death.——Thy sainted mother——
Her cruel wrongs call'd loud.——My eyes grow dim——
Ernest, receive thy daughter——and be to her,
What Thorring shou'd have been——what—had he life—
He wou'd be now.

ERNEST.

Pardon my rigour, princess!
Thy worth I knew not—and thy rank I scorn'd—
But take the best atonement I can offer,
My son, my Albert.—

AGNES.

Meekly let me kneel——

THORRING

THORRING.

Agnes!—my child!—One parting look!——
Where art thou?—
I see thee not.—'Tis night—black night.—That pang——
It tears—it racks.—Hark!—Heard ye not the voice
Of injur'd Blanch?—She calls me hence.—I come!
Farewell, my child!—a long farewell!—O!—O!—
[*Dies.*

AGNES.

And art thou gone?—irrevocably gone?——
(After a pause). Behold how still, how spiritless he lies!—
Day after day, and year succeeding year,
Yon sun shall kiss the earth which covers him,
And he unconscious sleep!

ALBERT.

Too haughty Thorring!
But, be his faults forgotten—while his virtues
Shall live recorded on the sculptur'd base,
And by their balmy odour heal thy sorrows.

AGNES.

Kind Albert!—O! forgive these gushing tears!
And thou, my sov'reign, deem me not ungrateful
To thee, or to that wonder-working Power,
Who, in my life eventful, has display'd,
That innocence is the peculiar care of Heaven.
(The curtain drops).

FINIS.

ERRATA. Page 46 line 20, for *an* read *and*.
—— 48 —— 21, for *Oswlad* read *Oswald*.
—— 50 —— 6, for *are* read *her*.
—— 52 —— 12, for *vile* read *vice*.
—— 56 —— 2, for *be ever* read *for ever*.

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